

Australian and New Zealand Mails

The temporary contract for transportation of the Australian, British and American Mails between San Francisco and Australia and New Zealand, commences this month. The out-going mail is being detained in San Francisco for six days beyond the time agreed by the former contract which expires the 13th of December next, to afford the contractors an opportunity of timing the arrival and departure of the mails in future so as to employ but three vessels instead of four as heretofore. The steamer to run in this service will be the Zealandia, Australia and City of Sydney. The City of New York is transferred to the Panama route, and the detention in Sydney will be limited to 13 days instead of six weeks as previously. We are glad to learn that the speed will be increased and the detention at way ports lessened, which will shorten the time occupied in crossing the Pacific Ocean considerably. These favorite vessels, which have afforded the traveling public so much satisfaction during the long period of 8 years, which the contract has been in existence, are fully equal to the requirements of the age, and by a trifling additional expenditure in the way of coals, will, we have little doubt, furnish records that will be pleasing to the public press to notice. The renewed contract now entered into for a period of twelve months, was wisely accepted, for it affords our country an opportunity of recognizing the right of the colonists to the co-operation of the American people in maintaining the service. For eight years it has been subsidized solely by the Colonies of New South Wales and New Zealand, notwithstanding the fact that Senator Chandler, in the year 1872, when he spoke as one of the representatives of the Government of this country, gave a solemn pledge in his place in the Senate "that substantial aid should be given to the maintenance of the service." The fact that the contract was placed on the table of the Senate, and was not taken up, was a sad evidence of the indifference of the United States to the welfare of the colonies. A reference to Senator Chandler's speech on that occasion will demonstrate the fact that such vessels as the Zealandia, Australia and City of Sydney are of the tonnage and power pointed out by him as necessary for the service. Practical experience shows the wisdom and foresight of the Senator in the remarks then made by him, and the indifference of the United States to the welfare of the colonies. A reference to Senator Chandler's speech on that occasion will demonstrate the fact that such vessels as the Zealandia, Australia and City of Sydney are of the tonnage and power pointed out by him as necessary for the service. Practical experience shows the wisdom and foresight of the Senator in the remarks then made by him, and the indifference of the United States to the welfare of the colonies.

THE LATE QUEEN OF MADAGASCAR—The death of Ranaivaloa II., Queen of Madagascar, was not an altogether unexpected event. For some years she has been in feeble health, and rumors of her demise have of late been frequent. The Daily News says she will be regretted, not only by her own subjects, but by all friends of humanity and progress. She was the third woman who has occupied the throne of Madagascar since the establishment of the Hova dynasty by Radama I. (1818). The reign of the first Ranaivaloa was marked by three sanguinary and prolonged persecutions of the Christian natives. Many were burnt, others hurled headlong from a precipice near the capital, and others sent into banishment, or to die of starvation or fever in desolate and unhealthy districts. Ranaivaloa, the last queen, although remaining to the last, a heathen, was remarkable for her genial and liberal spirit. She allowed freedom of opinion amongst her subjects, and even subscribed to the erection of Christian churches and schools. At the coronation of the second Ranaivaloa, however, a change took place. Heathen symbols were abolished, and the Bible placed in a position of honor on the monarch's right hand. From that time the country has continued to make rapid progress both in knowledge and the arts of civilization. The capital is really a handsome city, and has now a number of substantial buildings which would adorn even an English provincial town. Amongst the reforms which will render memorable the reign of Ranaivaloa II., are the abolition of trial by ordeal, the abolition of slavery as far as the Madagascar is concerned, the observance of Sunday by complete cessation from labor, a system of national education introduced, polygamy discontinued by royal decree, a fair and open trial secured to all offenders, and the conclusion of treaties of commerce and friendship with America, England, and Germany. The Court of the deceased queen was remarkable for the dignity of its arrangements and business-like manner in which everything was carried out. All marks of former barbarism were abolished, and the European usage and customs were adopted by the Queen as models for her guidance in ceremonial matters. The Prime Minister, who was the husband of the late Queen, is a man of great sagacity and intelligence; some of his sons have received their education in Europe, and he has more especially devoted himself to the moral and social elevation of the Malagasy by encouraging Christianity and making education compulsory throughout the Queen's dominions. It was the custom of the Court to adjourn for some months of the summer to Ambohimanga, a hill city about 12 miles south of the capital Antananarivo, and it is here that her Majesty spent the last month of her life.

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